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## Problems Faced by Muslim Minorities in India and Role of Mass Media

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Abstract:

This article is based on problems of Muslim minorities of India and role of Indian Mass Media. Because of the differences in socio-cultural practices, history and backgrounds, minorities have to grapple with the issue of identity everywhere which give rise to the problem of adjustment with the majority community. Different identity and their small number relative to the rest of the society develop feeling of insecurity about their life, assets and well-being. This sense of insecurity may get accentuated at times when relations between the majority and the minority communities in a society are strained or not much cordial. The minority community in a society may remain deprived of the benefit of opportunities of development as a result of discrimination. Because of the difference in identity, the minority community develops the perception of the sense of inequity in India. Researchers also observed the role of media and its coverage related to Muslim minorities of India. India as the largest democratic state should have provide equality to all its citizens and in the same way Indian media should highlight the problems of Muslims minorities instead of doing propaganda against them.

**Key words:** Muslim Minorities, Mass media, Islamic social sciences.

### Introduction:

India is a second largest country having multiethnic groups and Muslims are the leading minorities in India. All humans of the world are ordered

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to exhibit their religions in such a way not to hurt a single creature. Though religion is really a very private matter of a person, if we all respect each other religion, it's a very precious thing and also the central crux of every religion. All religions parley the right of all humans to accept a religion and perform it within the boundary of principles and rules recommended by that religion. (1) Religious majority or minority status is another route that could explain the fertility of religious groups in India. For instance, Muslims are the largest religious minority in India. (2) Minority is defined as "A group inferior to others and in the state of the non-dominant position. They are different and possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which are different from the rest of population and they are in the state of continuous struggle to preserve their heritage i.e. their culture, traditions, religion and language". (3)

The rights for majority vs. minority is the talk of town. Conventionally, the boon relish by the majority is not as like for the minority. We have many examples of dogmatism disclosed by a religion to the other religions but none of them can touch the bitter reality being customized by Hindus in India. India itself advocates her as a secular state. They have a view that they are having the biggest democracy of the world and a pluralistic society. They say that in their country every person is free to do whatever they want and they can adopt a religion of their own will. But the situation is quite opposite, all minorities in India especially Muslims, are siding extreme threats and they are not even avowed to enjoy the basic dogmas of their own religions. (4)

The Muslims are considered as the largest minority in India if we compare them with others Indian minorities statistically. Muslims in India are forming the largest minority in the country and according to a recent survey conducted in 2011, they comprise 14.4 percent of Indians total population. We can say that there are approximately 174 million Muslims people in Indian state. We should not use the word of the minority for Indian Muslims because after Indonesia (constituting 87.2 percent Muslims) and Pakistan (constituting 95-98 percent Muslims), India has the largest number of Muslims in their country so they should never be considered as a minority. (5)

Muslims who are living in India are basically the converts or the ones who didn't migrate during the separation period. They convert their religion because of the brutality of Hindus with the lower casts. The Hindus treated badly with the lower casts including SHUDRA. They find it suitable for them to convert their religion. They thought that this is the only way to get their rights but unfortunately, the Muslims are treated in a similar way as the lower casts. (6)

Indian Muslims have always been held responsible and questioned for India's disastrous partition in 1947 and the "Two Nation theory" which not only overshadows the validity of constitutional discussion but also keeps them in an uninterrupted sense of guiltiness. (7) India declared itself as a Secular state, secular state is the one where population enjoyed fundamental rights without any kind of discrimination but on ground reality is totally different. (8)

### **The Emergence of Islam in Sub-continent:**

In India, the religion Islam makes its way through the Arab invasion of Sindh in CE 712, by the successive incursion of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Through the Mughal emperors, Islam slowly spreads its power in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Mughals, by and large, refused from forceful alteration to Islam. Akbar – the great king set an example of generosity and give rights to non-Muslims as well. He was considered as the symbol of potency and forbearance. Many people started following and praising AKBAR because he was the one who gives equality to everyone even people started to convert their religion especially the Indians belonging to lower cast because the behavior with a lower cast of Hindus was ridiculous at that time. And in this way, the amount of Muslims in India arises. Similarly, the concentration of Muslims in the north-west of India (present-day Pakistan) and the east (present-day Bangladesh) increases gradually. If we talk about the decline of Muslims and Mughal in India, there are a number of factors behind it. After the loss of empire, Muslims have to face many problems including the bad policies and brutal behavior of the colonial powers after the disastrous mutiny of 1857. Muslims at that time was not willing to adopt the dominating British culture because adopting their culture means losing their own cultural identity also it was not according to their own values and beliefs system. Muslims than accept this bitter reality and they stop struggling for their betterment. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Indians completely take over charge. Muslims of that time started a movement for the protection of their culture and to spread awareness among Muslims. They started working hard which makes them strong. Certain groups were created and these Muslim-specific groups were created in response to requests from Muslim faculty. (9)

### **After Partition of Sub-continent:**

After the partition of Pakistan and India, many incidents have been taken place between both of these countries. At the time of migration, several of Muslims killed as a result of brutality from Indian armed forces. We cannot ignore the incident of the Babri Masjid. The babri mosque was built in 16th century and a great legacy of Muslims. In the city of

Ayodhya, Hindu activists demolished the Babri mosque on 6 December 1992. This knocking and cruel confrontation took place during the political rally and this rally suddenly changed into brutal aggressive acts and then they said that the Babri Masjid demolition is just an incident and there is nothing famous or infamous about it.

This incident depicts the cast level politics in India. With the charge of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in the 1980s and 1990s, they fight on the name of religion and cast started in India and they have exploited India on the basis of cast and religion and they named it as politics. This conflict has been spread from cities to villages. Hindustan politics always give way to wicked parties such as the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. But the incident of Babri mosque has created many of problems for Indian leaders as Muslims were very active during all this process. This incident strengthened the politics of Muslim identity. In the early 1990s, as part of the development of spiritual individuality politics more than a few opinionated groups rise that led to the prospect destructive expansion of caste individuality politics. (10)

Gradually, In the 1970s Indian Muslims began to reassess their very own position. The tragedy of 1975-77 proved a cut-off point, with Muslims in northern India who are specifically becoming sufferers of the forced sterilized campaign. Muslims started campaigns for their rights. The most miscellaneous challenges for the Indian's Muslims have been: the Shah Bano case (1985), where the impetration for a uniform civil code was met with outright friction from Muslim fundamentalist groups, parting views between the Hindu and Muslim communities (Ayodhya, 1992). Muslims are receiving continuous threats in India and are not enjoying any rights. Member secretary of Sachar Committee, Economist Abu Saleh Sharif said that he has observed that Indians Muslims are living below the line and are not enjoying their rights (The Indian Express, 31st October 2006).

### **Problems faced by Muslims of India:**

Muslims of India are facing severe problems from the time of partition. With the passage of time, despite minimizing their complications, they are increasing day by day. In the current era, problems are at its peak. Some of the serious societal problems of Indian Muslims are;

#### **a) Constitutional problems**

India is considered as one of the greatest pluralistic society as it ensures rights for majority and minorities as well but practically it is not so. (11) Constitution of India as give many rights to Indian Muslims but they are not getting their rights according to it. Indian Muslims have many

problems. One main dilemma is language. In northern parts of India, Muslims only know Urdu, but Indians do not like Urdu speaking people and treated them with cruelty. Because Urdu is not a recognized official language of India. Famous Muslims leaders struggled hard for Urdu to make it executive together with Hindi and they finally succeed and Urdu was ranked the official language in Uttar Pradesh in September 1989 but then there were sturdy clashes between Hindu and Muslim students and as a result, at least twenty-three people died.

In addition to the cruelty increasing from Kashmir, the Indian Muslims declare to have suffered from maltreatment and genocide in the state of Gujarat. Muslim leaders tried a lot to impeach those people who were mixed up in this viciousness and force Indian court. But police did not take it seriously. There were accusations made by the victims that the police is not taking notice of their complaints. They complained that the establishment and police failed to give them their constitutional rights and they are not arresting the culprits involved in mass murder. They are not taking strict actions against them. Additional conflicts arise after the terrorist bomb blasts on 11 July 2006 in Mumbai. In the blast, approximately 209 people killed and nearly 1000 were critically wounded. Indians blamed Muslims on this terrorist attack and blackmailed them badly and arrested many innocent Muslims.

#### **b) Educational problems**

According to recent data collected by National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in 2006, only 3.6% of Muslims who are above the twenties are college graduates, 54.6% Muslims in Villages and 60% in urban areas never went to schools. There are 3.1% of the Muslims community in urban areas and 1.2% who are postgraduates. In rural areas only 0.8% of Muslims are graduates. The committee also found that there are insufficient numbers of government schools in Muslim majority areas that's why less number of children attending the school. And shockingly there is only 6% share of Muslims in government jobs in every field, especially in high Muslim population states. The Report conclusion shows that there is no state where the demonstration of Muslims equivalent to their populace shares. (12)

On religion base, National Minority Commission has recognized Muslims as minorities alongside Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Janis. Among these minorities Muslims are the prime one. Despite of being largest minority they are far behind in terms of education as compare to other religious minorities. In few states their literacy rate is also terribly low.

Balika Vidhyalaya for the girls of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Class (OBC) and minorities in backward areas where feminine literacy is underneath the national standard and broad gender hole exist. In spite of all these supplies and involvement by the government, most wanted progress in education has not been happen particularly with regard to the Muslim minority. (13)

Sachar Committee Report was the first attempt to identify Muslims problems related to education and it has been proved that Muslims are actually facing problems in education. (14)

#### **c) Problems in performing religious practices**

They target the Indian Muslims for eating beef. Muslims eat beef because it has been allowed by their religion and cow meat is halal. But Hindus punish them for eating beef. In September 2015, a young man was killed in New Delhi because he slaughters his calf and eats his meat. The mob killed him cruelly. Similarly, a bus driver in Kashmir was killed and they spread petrol on him because they have a doubt that he had killed a calf and eat him. In another incident, Indians vicious activists spread a black ink on the face of a young talented Muslim lawmaker in the same qualm. (15) Main problem is that, Indian media portrays Muslims in a very negative way and all Indian population trust their media. They are breaking stories without doing any research and without checking authenticity and nature of the news. (16)

#### **d) The wicked and Brutal behavior of Indians**

Uttar Pradesh is India's most populous state and it has 22% of India's Muslim population. Unfortunately, this state recorded the most instances of violence against Muslims, especially after the BJP came to power in the state in a landslide victory. Also the appointment of Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu hardliner with controversial anti-Muslim views, as chief minister, also led to a spike in anti-Muslim violence in the state. Many of the reports reported that "Muslim families fleeing their homes". In Uttar Pradesh, an ancient mosque was brought down by Hindu fanatics in 1992 claiming it had been built by razing a Hindu temple. The bulldozing of the mosque triggered nationwide communal riots solicit hundreds of lives. (17)

#### **e) The act of hate against Muslims**

If we talk about the word minority in the Indian concept, so we will come to know that this minority has not been properly defined and discussed anywhere in the Indian Constitution. But the status of the minority has been conversed on many groups. If we talk about the Indian article, so it should remember that according to the article 29, the group living within the boundaries of Indian can promote its language, culture and literature.

Also in article 30, it is defined that a minority group “whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institution of their choice but we can still predict many Problems of Indian Muslims. Problems exist in every sector of India. The foremost tribulations which Muslims are facing are ignorance of their social and cultural life. (18)

**f) Economic problems**

Constitution of India has assured that minority Muslims will get the jobs but the lawmakers and implementations workers are not going to implement it firmly. They always give jobs to Hindus whether they were suitable for the job or not and Muslims despite having fine qualification will not be considered for the job. They are actually struggling to weaken the Muslims economically and they do not want to see them growing with sustainable growth. As Muslims have equal right to participate in improving economic condition of India and to get benefit from it. (19)

The numerical facts for Muslims in rustic areas are also severely disturbing;

1. In rural areas a massive number of people approximately 94.9% of Muslims in Below Poverty Line do not get their right of free food grains. Only 1.9% of Muslims get benefit from Antyodaya Anna Yojana Scheme which is a government programmed indented to stop death rate due to starvation by providing people with food grains at a subsidized rate.
2. 60.2% of rural Muslims do not own land
3. Only 3.2% of rural Muslims receive subsidized lend. Cases of discrimination also found by the committee, including Muslims not getting lend from even nationalized banks. ‘There is an implicit diktat that loans should not be given in specific areas dominated by Muslims because of the high probability of default’, the Committee observed after a visit to Rajasthan.
4. Only 2.1% Muslim farmers own tractors in the country having 4<sup>th</sup> largest tractors owning population in the world after the United States, Japan and Italy.
5. In 2005, the united progressive front government, notice the lack of authentic information on social, economic and educational status of Indian Muslims and found it out that they do not have access to basic necessities just because they have Muslim blood in them. (20)

Muslims of India are facing some serious fears from some authoritative and pressure groups under the supervision of current government of BJP. Extremist religious groups of Hindus always find reasons to hurt Muslims.

**Role of Pluralist and Multi-religious Groups:**

Recently, we have examined a very high graph in the hate against the minority communities in India, including the desecration of places of worship. The pluralist groups and the multi-religious character of the Indian society face a stable challenge against these problems encountering the minorities. These problems are not only because of government failure, but we can consider them the violation of basic human rights. Normal people take charge and they compose the basic fundamental statutes of freedom and equality, as guaranteed by the Indian constitution itself. Thus, the advancement and wellbeing of these minority religious communities ease on the amendments to existing laws and the good practice of the same. Paramount attention is required to protect the rights of Muslims in India otherwise they will suffer a lot. (21)

From the time when Narendra Modi take care, circumstances have become worse because of his anti-Muslim ideology. This was the statement of Najma Heptullah, the new minister of minority affairs. She has made this strange statement. Many people surprised at it and some were very pleased with this. She said that Muslims are not in minority as they have constituted a large amount of Indian population so they have a complete right on everything. (22)

**BJP Government and their Controversies:**

Muslims in India are facing constant threat storm from the Hindus from the last few decades. With the passage of time, the situation has become more worsen especially from the time when BJP government take charge and they have established the system of RAMRAJ in country. Riots have been conducted against the Muslims and hundreds of mosques have been demolished. The most heart taking incident is the incident of Babri Mosque in December 1992, the Hindus have built Ram Mandar on the site of mosque. The consequences of this event took place and several riots were conducted in which thousands of innocent Muslims have lost their lives.

The community of Sikh which has previously supported and cooperated with the Hindus, at the time of partition of India in 1947 got amenity. The state of Hyderabad was annexed by Hindus with force against the wishes of its ruler. India similarly engaged Travancore State which had also affirmed independent state. The relations of India with its neighboring states are not so good. Because India always tries to adopt the hegemonic way. India wants to dominant power of the South Asian region, so it has been caught up in mess created by Tamil Tiger in Sri Lanka and terrorist activities in Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan. Pakistan and India are both nuclear powers but they do not have friendly



relations with each other. Pakistan supports the right of Kashmiri's to decide about their political future if they want to be part of India or Pakistan, India's continuous authoritarian and dreadful activities in Kashmir. If India wants to form itself as an enlightened state than it should have to change its behavior towards other countries. If India does not change its attitude, it would just be ecstatic a rogue state of Hindu. (23)

Deficiency of a clear idea of minority under the constitution has given a probability for the conventional people and judiciary to slender down its broader concept and limiting it only up to the religious and linguistic minorities while excluding several other minorities like minorities based on economic, political, sexual vulnerabilities. (24)

### **Media Representation of Minorities:**

Mass media play an important role in the creation and distribution of ideologies (Gitlin, 1980; Hall, 1990) and thereby contribute to the overall cultural production of knowledge. The stories and images in the media provide resources (symbols) through which we organize a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture (Van Dijk, 1991). Numerous studies have shown mass media to articulate dominant social values, ideologies and developments, and that these characteristics often lead to misrepresentation or stereotypical portrayals of minorities in the media (Hall, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Saha, 2012; Van Dijk, 1991). Over the years, scholars have investigated media portrayals of minorities through the lenses of race, ethnicity, and religion. Media Scholars in the last two decades have continued to obtain similar findings of stereotypical representation of minorities in the media. Since the resurgence of religion in public life in late 2000s, there has been a shift in the academic interest of media studies from race and ethnicity to religion, and Islam has been at the fore. (25)

### **Portrayal of Muslims on Indian Media:**

In contemporary times no discussion on the "public sphere" is complete unless it takes into account the role of media in representing concerns of the citizens. The Media has become an extremely important institution, with almost unlimited power in today's society. It initiates debates, facilitates dialogue, and shapes public consciousness. We have to examine the role of metropolitan dailies in highlighting the concerns of a minority community (Muslims in this case) and in assimilating them in the mainstream society. We have to focus that, does the Indian media represent the interests of the Muslim community or just to portray a subverted image of the community? Indian media always portrays Muslims as a negative force. (26)

India, the largest democracy in the world, has a free press. Media play a significant role in constructing the image of Muslims in India. There is a significant difference in the framing and slanting of Muslims in different English newspapers. Unlike its communal language press counterpart, the English language press framed and slanted the Gujarat communal riots heavily loaded in favour of Muslims, exposing the communal elements in the riots during the study period. Nevertheless, regular stories followed a conventional pattern that has not helped much in perceiving the Muslim community in India differently. (27)

### **Use of Social Media by Muslims**

The young Muslims of India are now using social media platform for highlighting their issues. The motives of these digital activists are varied: to counter stereotypes about the Muslim way of life, reclaim the secular ground in an increasingly majority society, take on right-wing voices directly, advertise the good work done by the community. They are often up against “war rooms” run by political parties, especially the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, which use an army of volunteers to flood Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp with their messages. Indian Muslims living abroad supplement this work, much in the same way that some Hindu non-resident Indians on social media propagate BJP’s message. Muslims on social media often face a torrent of abuse. Their intention and effort is admirable but can Muslim online activists really make a difference, not least when social media has become an echo chamber where people surround themselves with those who share their worldview. Because many elements always degrade them. (28)

### **Conclusion:**

On all matter, India should show some flexibility and should present some permanent cure of present estrangement. Muslims have given many sacrifices and Struggle for their rights. Yet it is India, who will have to make the first constructive efforts to break the logjam. They should develop permanent rights for Muslims and should provide all the basic necessities to Muslims because as the citizen of India, they have the equal rights as the rest of Indian citizens. (29) There should be some social institutions for Muslims where they get their proper rights. Muslims should also aware about their rights. They could only get their rights if they know about it. For this, they should educate themselves. They have to build unity among themselves. State should also have to change their attitude towards Muslims. They always blame Muslims for every incident. They should give Muslims their proper rights. They should also have to

give respect to Muslims opinion as this is the greatest way to give respect to someone. (30) Researchers have also observed that Indian media is not supportive towards minorities and are in continuous war against them. Media should play a positive role for every sector of society. It is the only way in which state will flourish.

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